

VZCZCXRO5960
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2489/01 2841525
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 111525Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4921
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002489

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DEPT. FOR AF SPECIAL ENVOY NATSIOS, AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: DARFUR: NEW AU FORCE COMMANDER: GENERAL APREZI

¶1. (U) Summary: New African Union Force Commander in El Fasher, General Luke (or LKF) Aprezi, laid out his views on major challenges to the AMIS mission in an October 9 meeting with DCM Roberto Powers and Acting Defense Liaison officer Richard Shirley. Aprezi is originally from the Niger River Delta area of Nigeria. He spent time in the U.S. in the early 1980's and previously served both in Yugoslavia and Liberia. Aprezi noted that his mission "is not peacekeeping," but instead, "to provide a secure environment for humanitarian efforts." He laid out the major challenges to the AU in Darfur, focusing on a shortage of manpower and logistical support for moving his troops the large distances required to cover Darfur. End summary.

AMIS "Can't Dominate on the Ground"

¶2. (U) Aprezi strongly highlighted AMIS' lack of manpower, noting that one battalion covers 43,000 km. Companies are spread 200 kms apart, and effective patrolling is impossible over such large distances. When AMIS tries to increase coverage by dropping patrol sizes to platoon level they are overwhelmed in the field. Aprezi said that without sufficient checkpoints on main roads AMIS can't monitor who is moving what and to where, leaving the roads vulnerable to banditry.

¶3. (U) "AMIS has to be enhanced to do the job," Aprezi argued. Ideally he would like another nine additional battalions, one for each sector plus one for HQ as an escort force. If Aprezi gets additional troops he plans to augment checkpoints and increase observation towers to monitor the eight sectors' areas of responsibility.

¶4. (U) When queried about troop morale Aprezi stated that he had visited three sectors in his so far brief tenure in Fasher, and although morale seemed fine he was well aware that, "success breeds good morale." He pointed out the lack of sufficient recreation and exercise facilities for the troops, "the boys have to let off steam," he said.

Logistical Support

¶5. (U) Aprezi also noted he doesn't have the flexibility to concentrate power or move his troops quickly due to the fixed nature of the AMIS camps. The camps are far apart, they always need a guard force, and can't be moved without serious air asset support. He emphasized that with regard to this air asset support, "PAE has to support us, nothing is possible if the logistics are not there."

¶6. (U) When asked about his meetings with the GOS he said that they would agree to an increase in AMIS forces and

support, but rejected any UNMIS support. When queried about the proposed 105 UN advisors, he said that he had received a letter from the GOS asking for his staffing plan. Because of this, he believes that it was approved.

¶7. (U) Aprezi said he planned a strong approach to security problems in Tawila, a town with a large IDP camp approximately 80kms from AMIS headquarters in El Fasher. Aprezi stated that AMIS should not be having such serious problems ensuring security for IDP camps that are virtually in AMIS' back yard. Aprezi suggested AMIS might have a "command problem," and noted he was determined to exert firm command and control of his forces. With regard to the security situation Aprezi emphasized that AMIS must "dominate the ground" to stop non-signatory groups from "behaving with impunity." He said he wants to change the climate so it is also less permissive for general banditry.

The General's Priorities

¶8. (U) As his first priority Aprezi again flagged his lack of manpower, "we must have a credible force on the ground." He said that the old CONOPS had called for another six battalions, and although his new CONOPS calls for three more, the priority was to get the new battalions in as soon as possible.

¶9. (U) When asked, Aprezi admitted that they have no equipment for night operations, but argued that, as such equipment is less valuable at long range, "if you have checkpoints you don't need it, you know who's on the road." He said that once they have staffed observation posts they might need increased night operations equipment. In addition,

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he noted that AMIS has no combat air assets, and helicopter gunships would be a great asset for covering the eight sectors. Aprezi commended PAE, but also pushed for greater logistics support.

DPA: Non-Signatories

¶10. (U) When asked by the DCM about the impact of a non-signatory conference in Darfur, Aprezi noted that he has suggested the creation of a new forum to work with non-signatories since they have been removed from the Ceasefire Commission (CFC). He said non-signatories need to meet once a month with the AU and international community and, in parallel, political leaders should meet in Khartoum once a month to resolve political issues. Aprezi noted that he has tasked his information team to provide more briefings on AMIS' activities to the international community.

Janjaweed and Cease Fire Violations

¶11. (U) With regard to disarming the Janjaweed, Aprezi stated that he had already held two meetings of the CFC, and that disarmament was on the last meeting's agenda. He further stated that he was waiting for a copy of the GOS plan to disarm the Janjaweed to be submitted to the AU for review and then he would present it to the CFC. He argued that certain aspects could start without the non-signatories' participation in the CFC.

¶12. (U) With regard to investigating cease fire violations, Aprezi argued that a lack of good information on the ground means that AMIS can't clearly identify or hold accountable the culprits. "We must be able to hold people responsible," he said. He mentioned that he plans to increase his intelligence capacity, and extend a network of informants in

the IDP camps.

¶13. (U) COMMENT: General Aprezi appears to have a good grasp of the challenges AMIS faces in Darfur, and a plan to address these challenges. However, much of his plans are predicated on an increase in troop strength, funding, and logistical support from the international community. END COMMENT.
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